for local calls has to make many calls aggregating 3 minute duration and pay multiple call charges instead of single local call; and

(c) if so, the steps being taken to rectify the system to ensure full utilization of call time?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) No, Sir. No such complaints, about local calls of 3 minutes duration getting snapped after 10-20 seconds have been received in general. However, there are a few isolated cases of small capacity rural exchages of C-DOT technology, getting interrupted occasionally.

(b) and (c) The problem is being resolved by C-DOT the technology provider of these exchanges.

Opening of Post Offices in Gram Panchayat villages

†1459. SHRI MANGANI LAL MANDAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the total number of Gram Panchayat villages without any post office is 1,15,605 in the country which is about 49.35 per cent of the Gram Panchayat villages in the country; and

(b) if so, whether Government propose to open and provide post offices in all such Gram Panchayat villages in the country where there are no post offices and by when?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) To the extent of information available, there are 1,23,014 Gram Panchayat villages without post office as on 31-3-2004, which constitutes approximately 50% of the total Gram Panchayat villages in the country.

(b) Post offices are opened subject to a proposal complying with distance, population and income norms, and availability of resources. Details of the related norms are given in the Statement (*see* below). Therefore, it is not possible to fix a time frame within which Post Offices will be provided in all Gram Panchayat villages.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

Statement

Norms for Opening Post Offices

1. Norms for opening Extra Departmental Branch Post Offices:

1.1 Population:

(a) In Normal Areas:

3000 population in a group of villages (including the PPO village).

(b) In Hilly, Tribal, Desert and Inaccessible Areas:

500 population in an individual village or 1000 population in a group of villages.

1.2 Distance:

(a) In Normal Areas:

The Minimum distance from the nearest existing post office will be 3 Kms.

(b) In Hilly, Tribal, Desert and Inaccessible Areas:

The distance limit will be the same as above except that in Hilly Areas, the minimum distance limit can be relaxed by the Directorate in cases where such relaxation is warranted by special circumstances which should be clearly explained while submitting a proposal.

1.3 Anticipated Income:

(a) In Normal Areas:

The minimum anticipated revenue will be $33^{1}/_{3}\%$ of the cost.

(b) In Hilly, Tribal, Desert and Inaccessible Areas:

The minimum anticipated income will be 15% of the cost.

It is further to be ensured that as a result of opening of new post office, the loss in respect of parent post office does not increase beyond the permissible limit nor is its income reduced below the minimum prescribed.

2. Criteria for upgrading/opening Departmental Sub Post Offices:

(a) In Rural Areas:

The Minimum work load of the Extra Departmental Branch Post Office, proposed to be upgraded, should be five hours per day. The permissible limit of annual loss is Rs 2400/- in Normal Rural areas and Rs. 4800/- in Tribal and Hilly areas.

It is further to be ensured that as a result of the opening of a new post office, the loss in respect of the parent post office does not increase beyond the permissible limit nor is its income reduced below the minimum prescribed.

(b) In Urban Areas:

In Urban areas, the post office should initially be self-supporting, and, at the time of the first annual review, it should show a 5% profit to be eligible for further retention.

The minimum distance between two post offices should be 1.5 Kms. in cities with a population of 20 lakhs and above, and 2 Kms. in other Urban Areas. No two delivery offices, however, should be closer than 5 Kms. from each other.

Heads of Circles have powers to relax the distance condition in 10% of the cases.

A Delivery Post Office in Urban Area should have a minimum of 7 Postmen's beats.

Benefit of I.T. to Rural Areas

†1460. SHRI KRIPAL PARMAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any scheme to formulate plan to provide benefit of information technology to rural areas;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government are aware of the fact that because more than 90 per cent of population of the country is not conversant with English so they can be provided the benefit of information technology either in Hindi or other regional languages; and

(d) if so, keeping in view the above fact, what steps have been taken by Government for development, promotion and propagation of information technology through Hindi?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.